

Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /080 W

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R 031327Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0219

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

USUN NEW YORK 0266

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRIDGETOWN 0195

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS:PGOV,PINT,AC

SUBJ:PREMIER OF ANTIGUA ANNOUNCES GENERAL ELECTIONS

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. THE PREMIER OF ANTIGUA, GEORGE WALTER, HAS ANNOUNCED THAT GENERAL ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD ON FEBRUARY 18, ACCORDING TO THE ADVOCATE NEWS (BARBADOS). BOTH THE RULING PROGRESSIVE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND THE OPPOSITION ANTIGUA LABOUR PARTY OF FORMER PREMIER VERE BIRD HAVE PUT FORWARD CANDIDATES FOR ALL 17 SEATS, THE BARBADOS DAILY REPORTS. REGISTRATION ON BOTH ISLANDS CONSTITUTING THE STATE OF ANTIGUA (ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA) IS ABOUT 26 THOUSAND; IN 1971, DESPITE THE FACT THAT 18-YEAR-OLDS ARE VOTING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE UP-COMING ELECTIONS, REGISTRATION WAS NEAR 31 THOUSAND.

2. WALTER AND HIS PLM HAVE DEFINED THE CONTEST AS ONE BETWEEN PARTIES OF DIFFERING VIEWS ON INDEPENDENCE. IF

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RETURNED, THE PM SAYS THEY WILL CONSIDER THEMSELVES TO

HAVE A MANDATE FOR INDEPENDENCE, WHICH THEY WILL SOON PROCLAIM. THE ALP TOO WANT INDEPENDENCE, BUT ONLY AFTER THE CONDITIONS OF THE ASSOCIATED STATES ACT HAVE BEEN FULFILLED: A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY FOR INDEPENDENCE IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AND AMONG THE ELECTORATE AS DETERMINED BY REFERENDUM. END UNCLASSIFIED

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3. COMMENT: WHILE IT CAN BE CALLED AN OPEN CONTEST, WE GIVE THE EDGE TO THE PLM, ESPECIALLY SINCE THEY ARE SEEN AS THE PRO-INDEPENDENCE PARTY AND THE ALP, WHILE NOT ANTI-INDEPENDENCE, SEEMS LESS ZEALOUS FOR IT. ALSO, IN THIS AREA, THOSE IN POWER GENERALLY HAVE THE ADVANTAGE IN AN ELECTORAL CONTEST. INDEPENDENCE WILL COME BEFORE THE YEAR IS OUT, PROBABLY TOWARD THE END OF IT, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT HMG HAS NOT YET REACHED A DECISION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT A REFERENDUM MUST BE HELD.
BRITTON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INDEPENDENCE, LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BRIDGE00195
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760040-0980
From: BRIDGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760289/aaaadagq.tel
Line Count: 80
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <19 MAY 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REMIER OF ANTIGUA ANNOUNCES GENERAL ELECTIONS BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, AC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006